

**STATEMENT OF P. DANIEL SMITH, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 1430, TO AUTHORIZE
THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO CONDUCT A SPECIAL RESOURCE
STUDY OF THE BARANOV MUSEUM IN KODIAK, ALASKA, FOR POTENTIAL
INCLUSION IN THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM.**

March 9, 2004

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 1430, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the Baranov Museum. The Department supports H.R. 1430 with the minor modifications explained in this testimony. We believe that this study would provide an opportunity to explore partnerships with a wide range of state, local, private, and other federal entities for the purpose of protecting and interpreting important national and international cultural resources in the area the study would encompass. Therefore, we recommend including language in the bill that makes it clear that the study is meant to evaluate a range of alternatives (for the building and its collections), in addition to potential inclusion in the National Park System.

It is our understanding that the City of Kodiak and not the National Park Service will conduct and fund this study from statutory aid already received for preservation of the building. The National Park Service will provide technical assistance to apply the criteria for suitability and feasibility to designate the museum as a unit of the National Park System.

The Baranov Museum on Kodiak Island is the only surviving Russian building known to have been associated with both the Russian America Company and the Alaska Commercial Company. These companies were the pillars of the Russian and early American administration of Alaska, and shaped the face of northwestern America through commerce, administration, law enforcement and exploration. Preserved in tradition, the history of Russian America is nationally and internationally monumental to the legacy of Alaska. A hundred years before the purchase of Alaska and the investment of William Seward's folly in 1867, the northern reaches of this country were managed by the Russian American Company, a corporation set up by the Russian government to regulate the fur trade and other commercial enterprises. It operated as a colonial charter company similar to the English and Dutch East Indies Companies, which founded the colonies on our country's eastern seaboard.

Around 1808, Alexander Baranov, manager of the Russian America Company, built the large two-story log warehouse overlooking the harbor. A shrewd manager, Baranov moved the corporation towards greater international collaboration, while at the same time integrating Alaska Natives into positions of power and equality. One hundred years later, leading merchant W.J. Erskine made the building his home. In addition, the building is one of only three remaining Russian period buildings extant in the Western Hemisphere. The Baranov Museum was designated a National Historic Landmark on June 2, 1962. The City of Kodiak owns the Baranov Museum, with management services provided by the Kodiak Historical Society. The Society saved the building from the threat of demolition after the 1964 earthquake and tsunami. Through their efforts it was leased in 1967 for use as a museum.

In 1963, the National Park Service first conducted a suitability and feasibility study of the house and grounds as a new area and prepared a master plan for “Proposed Old Kodiak National Historic Memorial.” The proposal was not passed because of concern that the preservation of the building would conflict with industrial development and fuel storage near the dock on its boundaries. During the past 40 years, the National Park Service has consistently provided technical assistance in the fields of historic preservation, maintenance, and interpretation to both the city and historical society through the National Historic Landmark program.

The National Park Service supports the opportunity to work with the City of Kodiak on this special resource study to ensure that all possibilities and alternatives for the future preservation of this National Historic Landmark are developed in full collaboration, consultation, and partnership with the community and its entities. This special resource study will consider the criteria for suitability and feasibility as a new unit as one of several planning alternatives and desired futures for this building and its resources.

This concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Proposed Amendment to S. 1430

On page 2, at the end of line 2, delete the period and add: “as well as a range of other viable preservation and management alternatives.”